Taiwan Studies in Germany and a German Approach to European Taiwan Studies: 
Idea, Concept and Agenda of the European Research Center on Contemporary Taiwan (ERCCT)

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Summary

Taiwan studies played at best a marginal role at German universities for most of the post-War era and have only gained momentum in the early 2000s, in concurrence with the foundation of a European Association of Taiwan Studies. This paper gives a brief account of those few German scholars who dedicated a good part of their academic careers to the study of Taiwan and the institutionalization of Taiwan studies in Germany. It then focuses on more recent developments, most notably the establishment of the European Research Center on Contemporary Taiwan (ERCCT) in June 2008, a German endeavour to promote European cooperation in modern and contemporary Taiwan studies. The paper ends by critically reflecting on necessary steps to further reduce the national “compartmentalization” of Taiwan studies in Europe.

1. Taiwan Studies in Germany

Taiwan studies in Germany, as in the rest of Europe, have hardly been visible at research institutions and universities until the early 2000s. Before, it was only at the Universities of Saarbrücken, Munich and Bochum where Taiwan received attention in both research and teaching. This resulted foremost from the interests of individual scholars. The late political scientist Jürgen Domes, who taught in Saarbrücken since 1975 and later established a small China Research Unit (Forschungsstelle China) at the Department of Political Science, was one of the very few who continuously did research on Taiwan’s domestic politics and taught systematically on the island republic’s political system. A “matter-of-fact” anti-communist, Domes was a frequent visitor to Taiwan and well connected with a number of high-ranking KMT officials. His encyclopaedic knowledge on Taiwan’s post-war history, its leading political figures and, after democratization, its national and local elections, made him a highly respected Taiwan expert both in the West and in Taiwan proper. Unfortunately, after his retirement in 1997, the University of Saarbrücken closed down his China Research Unit and transferred his Chair to another faculty. There was no interest to make Dome’s research on both China and Taiwan a lasting legacy.

Another Taiwan scholar of the early days who still strongly committed to the study of the island republic’s history and politics is political scientist Gottfried-Karl Kindermann, who taught at Munich University’s renowned Geschwister-Scholl-Institute of Political Science until the early 1990s. Though covering different countries in East Asia and gaining a reputation for his profound knowledge of the regions post-war development, Kindermann has given much

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1 The former journal China aktuell, edited by the then Institute of Asian Affairs in Hamburg, included a Taiwan section informing on current political, economic and social developments on the island. This was the only regular publication to inform the scholarly community and interested observers on Taiwan. With its transformation into the new Journal of Current Chinese Affairs, published bimonthly since 2009 by the newly established Global Institute of Area Studies (GIGA) in Hamburg, these overviews have been cancelled. However, the journal now publishes a special Taiwan edition each year, jointly edited with the European Research Center on Contemporary Taiwan at Tuebingen University. To this date (December 2011) three special editions have been published. See the journal’s website on http://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/giga/jcca/index.

2 Jürgen Domes died on September 22nd, 2001. One of his most known students is Eberhard Sandschneider, professor of political science at the Otto-Suhr-Institute of Political Science at Free University of Berlin and, since 2003, Director of the Research Institute of the German Society for Foreign Policy (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik), a government-sponsored think tank. Another one is Wu Tung-yeh, senior research fellow at the Institute of International Relations at National Chengchi University in Taiwan. For a selection of Taiwan-related publications of Jürgen Domes see the reference list.
attention to Taiwan during his whole academic career.\(^3\) Like Domes, he travelled (and travels) there regularly, has come to know many important Taiwanese politicians and scholars and is very much respected by those who have met him over the years.

Both Domes and Kindermann had a keen interest in the history of the Chinese republic and the Kuomintang, and both deeply admired Taiwan’s evolution from authoritarianism to democracy. Domes worked on the PRC as well and produced an internationally renowned textbook on its political system,\(^4\) while Kindermann was more interested in other polities than China, most notably Korea, and kept in perspective East Asia as a whole.

The late sinologist Helmut Martin also belongs to the first generation of post-war Taiwan scholars in Germany and spent the later part of his academic life to the study of Taiwanese modern literature and culture. To some extent, he was forced to do so: After the Beijing spring of 1989 when he outraged the Chinese government with his relentless criticism of the suppression of the student movement he was banned from going to China for the rest of his life. After he took the Chair of the Department of Chinese Languages and Literatures at Bochum University in 1979, he gradually built up one of the largest research libraries on Taiwanese modern literature in Europe. Due to his persistent efforts, Bochum became the first place in Germany with a more institutionalized structure of Taiwan studies, attracting many younger students who would follow him with much enthusiasm. A Research Unit on Taiwanese Culture and Literature was established at Bochum’s Faculty of East Asian Sciences in November 2002, three years after Martin’s sudden death. Originally sponsored by Taiwan’s Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange, the Research Unit has since been successfully dedicated to serve as a “forum for contact and cooperation in the field of Taiwan Studies in order to counter the marginalization of Taiwan research”\(^5\). Besides the European Research Center on Contemporary

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\(^3\) In 1963, Kindermann published the first systematic comparative study in German on Chinese Communism and Sun Yat-sen’s Three Principles of the People which is meanwhile counted as a “classic” in the field of China studies. See Kindermann, G.-K. (1963). Konfuzianismus, Sunyatsenismus und chinesischer Kommunismus: Dokumente zur Begründung und Selbstdarstellung des chinesischen Nationalismus. Freiburg: Rombach. Kindermann has also been much occupied with International Relations Theory and established the so-called Munich School of Neorealism. Far in his 70s, he is still very active today. Interestingly, Kindermann and Domes pursued their careers on different tracks and hardly communicated on Taiwan, though they very much respected each other’s work. For some of Kindermann’s Taiwan-related publications see the reference list.


Taiwan (see below), the Research Unit is the only formal institution in Germany that promotes the study of Taiwan, for its part with a focus on history and culture.

Another “first generation” scholar of Taiwan is Oskar Weggel, who studied law and sinology and was a research fellow at the Institute of Asian Affairs (Institut für Asienkunde) until his retirement in 2000. Weggel is the author of the first and, to date, only German-language book on Taiwanese history. He covered the political and social development of Taiwan in China aktuell since the beginning of its publication in 1972 and one is safe to say that no other German author has written more on Taiwan than him. For Weggel, Taiwan was a role model of modernised Confucianism or “meta-confucianism”, as he labeled his approach to understand both the Taiwan economic and political “miracle”, and China’s farewell to Maoism in the late 1970s.

After the establishment of the Bochum Research Unit, a second major step to institutionalize Taiwan Studies in Germany was the instalment of a Chair of Greater China Studies at Tübingen University’s Department of Chinese and Korean Studies in 2003, explicitly designed to the study of and teaching on Taiwan. The current chair, Gunter Schubert, has conducted much research on Taiwan’s democratization, party politics, national identity, cross-strait relations and cross-strait integration since the early 1990s. Moreover, courses on Taiwan’s history, politics and society have been systematically integrated in the Department’s Modern China programme (as in Bochum as well). With the formal inauguration of the European Research Center on Contemporary Taiwan (ERCCT) in June 2008 (see below), social science-based research on Taiwan has been elevated to a major field of knowledge production on East Asia in Tübingen.

With different agendas and research foci, Bochum and Tübingen are the only two locations in Germany today where Taiwan studies have taken root and shape the academic agenda of their respective Sinology departments. With the single exception of the Chair of Greater China Studies in Tübingen, however, there is no

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7 Weggel and Martin were among the very first (and few) foreign students coming to Taiwan as early as the 1960s when there was yet no way to study in China. Another one was Prof. Werner Meissner who later worked at the Otto-Suhr-Institute of Political Science at Free University of Berlin and, in the final years of his career, headed the Department of Government and International Studies (GIS) at Hong Kong Baptist University.
9 Of course, there are more German sinologists and social scientists at other universities teaching on Taiwan (though often not engaging in systematic research). They are listed in the appendix.
faculty position in a German university that explicitly covers, at least partially, Taiwan studies – not to speak of a Chair of Taiwan Studies.

The situation in Germany reflects rather well what can be seen throughout Europe: Taiwan studies still figure as a marginal area of scholarly interest within or next to the China studies field, and their positive development in some locations mostly depends on the initiative and long-term interest of individual scholars, not on the academic foresight of university administrations or the strategic thinking of German sinologists. These general conditions are hard to overcome within Germany itself for reasons related both to the structure of German sinology departments and – simply spoken – to the limited appeal that Taiwan studies do attain among faculties and students. Those few younger German scholars who are interested in the promotion of the field and spend much of their time on this objective – most notably Jens Damm, Henning Klöter and Gunter Schubert – have thus “gone European”. Working in different areas within the Taiwan studies field, they have united with their counterparts in other countries to build up and extend a European network of Taiwan scholars, most notably via the European Association of Taiwan Studies (EATS).10 Taiwan studies in Germany are hence a part of what must be called a joint European endeavour since some ten years now.

2. The European Research Center on Contemporary Taiwan (ERCCT)

The European Research Center on Contemporary Taiwan (ERCCT) at Tübingen University was formally established in June 2008 as a major step to bring Taiwan studies in Germany into a European context. It is jointly sponsored by the university and the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange (CCK Foundation), initially for six years. Additional institutional funding has been offered by Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2011. The ERCCT complements the efforts of Bochum’s Taiwan Research Unit, the Centre of Taiwan Studies at SOAS and other university-level undertakings to promote Taiwan studies,11 and thus highlights the cooperative approach that Europeans have taken to institutionalize the field.

10 EATS was inaugurated in 2004 at London’s renowned School of Asian and Oriental Studies (SOAS) and was registered as an independent association during the 7th EATS conference in April 2010 held in Tuebingen.

11 For instance, there are a so-called Taiwan Cultural Research Programme at the London School of Economics, a Taiwan Studies Programme at Oxford’s St Anthony’s College (now to be shifted to the University of Nottingham
In contrast to the other institutions, the ERCCT does specifically promote social science research on contemporary Taiwan at the Ph.D. and postdoc level and hence supports young and emerging scholars in the field to conduct their research. It is not a research institute in the “classical” sense, but serves as a platform for students from Europe and Taiwan specialising on Taiwanese politics and law, economics, society and cross-strait relations who work together and engage in intensive scholarly dialogue. Qualified students can apply to become ERCCT fellows permanently (until completing their research project) or temporarily (visiting) and, if accepted, are provided with office space and access to all facilities of Tübingen University. Regular workshops throughout each academic term, running under the heading of Taiwan Colloquium, oblige ERCCT research fellows to report on their progress on a regular basis.

Visiting scholars from Europe and Taiwan are invited to the ERCCT during each academic term to interact with the center’s research fellows, assess their theoretical approaches and methodology and critically discuss their empirical results. They are fully refunded for all travel and accommodation expenses and also obtain a stipend. By presenting ongoing projects of their own, ERCCT visiting scholars are asked to explain to the center’s fellows how they structure their research and tackle theoretical and methodological problems, giving them a better idea of how established Taiwan scholars do their job.

As a general rule, after one year in Tübingen ERCCT fellows go to Taiwan for fieldwork in their second year. For that purpose, the center has set up a closely-knit network of partner institutions that comprises some of the most renowned universities and research institutions in Taiwan and stretches from the north to the south of the island. A special tutorial system administered by the ERCCT and its partners assists ERCCT fellows in giving them access to a suitable research institute and its facilities, provides them with office space, and nominates a “tutor” working at the selected institute to figure as a contact partner for the visiting fellow. After they have conducted their fieldwork the fellows return to ERCCT headquarters in Tübingen to finish their dissertations or postdoc studies, reporting regularly on their process of writing in the Taiwan Colloquium. The ERCCT then helps them to bring their work to the attention of international publishing houses. The ultimate benchmark of the ERCCT’s success, therefore, is the publication of

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after Steve Tsang’s move from Oxford to Nottingham in April 2011), and small Taiwan Centers at the University of Vienna and Ljubliana, Slovenia.

12 ERCCT fellows usually remain Ph.D. students of their respective home universities, but can also become registered Ph.D. students at Tuebingen University if they find a supervisor.
high quality books on Taiwan-related topics published by ERCCT fellows for an international audience.\footnote{The newly established \textit{Routledge Research on Taiwan Series}, edited by Dafydd Fell, provides young Taiwan scholars with an excellent opportunity to get published, if they meet the required standards.}

In cooperation with the ROC’s Ministry of Education, the ERCCT runs an ERCCT Fellowship-Programme that each year gives one European Ph.D. or postdoc student a two-year grant to pursue his or her studies. The grant period can be extended to three years for Ph.D. students after successful evaluation of their respective work progress. Members of the ERCCT Advisory Board screen the research proposals submitted by applicants and assist in the selection of the final grantee.\footnote{Based on the assessments of board members specialising in the research field of the applicant, a final decision is taken by the ERCCT Fellowship Committee, consisting of the ERCCT Director, Managing and Co-Managing Director, and the Head of the Cultural Division of the Taipei Representative Office in Berlin. Since mid-2011, the ERCCT also assists those fellows who do not have grant support by a small living allowance. Generally speaking, however, fellows must take care of their funding by themselves.} The Advisory Board comprises renowned scholars from Europe and Taiwan who also help the ERCCT in identifying fellows and visiting scholars, and in strengthening the center’s academic ties with research institutions and universities in Taiwan and Europe.

Since the summer term 2011, the ERCCT also runs a short-term visiting fellow programme to invite up to two Taiwanese doctoral or postdoc students each academic term for one month to visit the ERCCT, introduce their ongoing research and take part in ERCCT activities.\footnote{This program is co-financed by the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy.} Starting in 2012, the center will organize an annual Young Scholars Workshop with up to 15 students from Europe and Taiwan to discuss their research, engage in academic dialogue and, hopefully, establish networks for future cooperation. Finally, the ERCCT organizes academic workshops with the intention to initiate long-term research projects conducted by Western and Taiwanese scholars. The first of these events will be an international workshop in June 2012 to prepare for an interdisciplinary research undertaking on “The China Impact on Taiwan”, jointly organized by the ERCCT and Academia Sinica’s Institute of Sociology. Moreover, the center organizes the annual Taiwan Documentary Film Festival (TDFF) which took place for the first time in 2006.\footnote{In April 2010, the center hosted the 7\textsuperscript{th} annual conference of the European Association of Taiwan Studies.}

Since its establishment, the ERCCT’s development has been encouraging. It now takes care of seven research fellows with another one to be affiliated to the center in early 2008.\footnote{The ERCCT has also invited eight Associate Research Fellows who reside and work at universities or academic institutions outside Tuebingen and join the center's activities occasionally.} This almost meets the ambitious benchmark of ten ERCCT
fellows working at the center throughout each academic year. Currently, two fellows are conducting fieldwork in Taiwan. They are temporarily affiliated to National Chengchi University’s Department of Political Science and its Graduate Institute of East Asian Studies. Other fellows have worked at Academia Sinica’s Institute of Political Science and National Taiwan University’s Departments of Political Science and Sociology during their fieldwork period. It is expected that the first two research projects will be concluded by next year.

The ERCCT has also sealed a cooperation agreement with the GIGA Institute of Asian Studies in Hamburg and the National Institute of Chinese Studies, White Rose East Asia Centre, to jointly publish one Taiwan edition every year in the Journal of Current Chinese Affairs.  

The ERCCT is run by a Director (Prof. Gunter Schubert), a Managing Director (Mr. Stefan Braig) and, since recently, a Co-Managing Director (Dr. Stefan Fleischauer). There is also a small support team to help in the administration of the center. Working languages at the ERCCT are Mandarin Chinese and English. The ERCCT administers a website that contains detailed information on its organization, its research fellows, and its numerous activities (www.ercct.uni-Tübingen.de).

As successful as the ERCCT has been since its inauguration in 2008, there is still much leeway to do better. Most importantly, the center wants to attract more young postgraduate students joining it, either on a permanent or visiting basis. This requires more funding to provide those fellows with at least some money to cover their expenses in case they do not have grant support. At the same time, the ERCCT must secure continuous funding for its operating budget in order to maintain its services and activities. Since the center has been established with a long-term perspective, it is hoped that good performance will encourage the CCK Foundation to grant institutional support in the future to secure its further existence, making it possible for the ERCCT to concentrate its efforts on looking for additional funding in order to expand its scope of activities and provide more services to Taiwan scholars from all over the world interested in visiting the ERCCT and establishing contacts to other scholars and academic institutions in Germany and Europe.

3. Outlook

18 The first Taiwan edition came out in April 2010 and is available via http://hup.sub.uni-hamburg.de/giga/jcca/issue/archive, as are the second and third editions. Guest editors are invited for that purpose.
The Taiwan studies field has seen a remarkable institutionalization at the European level over the last years, and Germany has contributed its fair share to this development. The most important aspect of this development is the increasingly dense network of European Taiwan scholars at different research institutions in different countries, the rise of a number of new centres dedicated to the promotion of Taiwan studies, and the successful establishment of the European Association of Taiwan Studies. It can be expected that the current dynamic is sustainable if basic funding requirements can be fulfilled. The CCK Foundation, the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy, and the ROC government have all an important role to play here. At the same time, sinology departments must take a new look at the Taiwan studies field and change their recruitment practices to give Taiwan scholars a fair chance of getting a proper job. Job opportunity encourages risk (in specialising on Taiwan), while sound area expertise and academic quality of Taiwan scholars justifies recruitment. To drive forward this mutual process must be a major concern for our community worldwide. The first World Congress of Taiwan Studies in April 2012 is a most helpful step in this regard.
Appendix

I. Selected publications of Germany’s “first generation” Taiwan Scholars

a) Jürgen Domes


b) Gottfried-Karl Kindermann


developmentspolitischen Alternativen für China (Voices of the Other China: Nationalist Experts on

Begründung und Selbstdarstellung des chinesischen Nationalismus (Confucianism, Sunyatsenism
and Chinese Communism: Documents on the Rationale and Self-Description of Chinese

Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung.

c) Helmut Martin

Hamburg: Institut für Asienkunde.


und Literatur Chinas, Ruhr-Universität.


Literaturhistoriographie, Buchrezensionen zur chinesischen, taiwanesischen und japanischen
Literatur (Taiwanese Literature – Postcolonial Ways Out: Colonial Era, Post-War Literature and
Historiography of Literature, Book Reviews of Chinese, Taiwanese and Japanese Literature),
Dortmund: Projekt-Verlag.

Bochum: Sektion Sprache und Literatur Chinas, Ruhr-Universität.


Köln: Bundesinstitut für Ostwissenschaften und Internationale Studien.

in the PRC. Köln: Bundesinstitut für Ostwissenschaften und Internationale Studien.

Martin, H. [Hg.] (1982). Blick übers Meer: Chinesische Erzählungen aus Taiwan (View to the Sea. Chinese
Stories from Taiwan). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens.


Institut für Asienkunde.


Asienkunde.

Bochum: Sektion Sprache und Literatur Chinas, Ruhr-Universität.

d) Oskar Weggel


II. List of ERCCT Partner Institutions in Taiwan

- **Academia Sinica, Taipei**
  - Institute of Political Science
  - Institute of Sociology
  - Institutum Iurisprudentiae

- **National Taiwan University, Taipei**
  - College of Social Sciences
  - Department of Political Science
  - Department of Sociology
  - College of Law

- **National Chengchi University, Taipei**
  - College of Social Sciences
  - Department of Political Science
  - Graduate Institute of East Asian Studies
  - Graduate Institute of Development Studies
  - Taiwan Studies Center

- **National Chung Hsing University, Taichung**
  - Graduate Institute of International Politics

- **National Cheng Kung University, Tainan**
  - College of Social Sciences
  - Department of Political Science
  - Department of Law and Institute of Law in Science and Technology

- **National Sun Yat-sen University, Kaohsiung**
  - College of Social Sciences
  - Institute of Political Science
  - Institute of Sociology
III. List of Taiwan-interested scholars based in Germany

Stefan Braig, M.A., University of Tübingen
Dr. Stefan Fleischauer, University of Tübingen
Prof. Dr. Thomas Fröhlich, University of Erlangen-Nürnberg
Dr. Christian Göbel, currently University of Duisburg-Essen
Dr. Hermann Halbeisen, University of Cologne
Dr. Henning Klöter, University of Bochum
Prof. Barbara Mittler, University of Heidelberg
Prof. Eberhard Sandschneider, Free University of Berlin
Prof. Axel Schneider, University of Göttingen
Prof. Gunter Schubert, University of Tübingen
Dr. Hans-Wilm Schütte, University of Hamburg
Dr. Carsten Storm, Dresden University of Technology